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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines a framework for analyzing existing quality initiatives and for planning and implementing new ones particularly designed for colleges in Great Britain in their new status as independent, incorporated entities. It is designed to assist colleges in managing quality and in using quality management as a means of institutional development. The framework's starting premise is that each institution must find its own route to quality and that externally prescribed approaches are usually the least effective. Following a discussion of the purpose of a quality framework and of the difference between procedural and transformational notions of quality, the following framework components are listed: (1) leadership and strategy, (2) teamwork, (3) customer requirements, and (4) systems and procedures. Each of these is then discussed in detail with the use of a diagram that shows the relations between different elements and specific types of tasks. A section on evaluation looks at immediate, short-term and long-term evaluation. An exploration of the management of quality compares a quality college with a college managed along traditional lines and describes the quality college as having a flatter structure with strong, integrating horizontal links. A conclusion reviews linking the framework in this paper with the European Quality Award. (Contains 24 references.) (JB)

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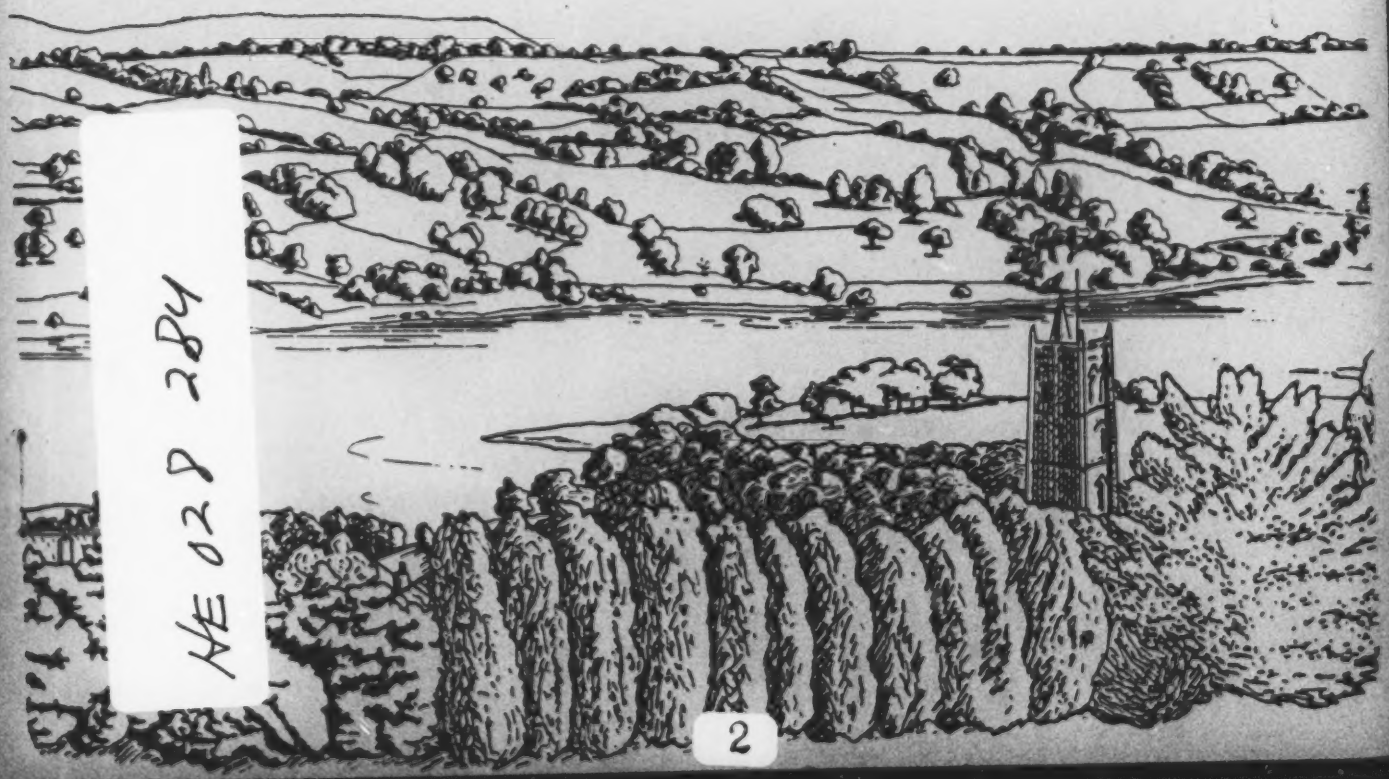

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In recent years he has been particularly interested in the application of industrial quality methodology – and particularly TQM – to education. Edward has written extensively on quality issues and has been involved in a number of national and international quality initiatives. He was a consultant in 1994 to Kodak Canada Inc., and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education sponsored 'Quality schools' initiative in Ontario schools. He is a regular speaker at Staff College conferences on quality management issues.

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Mendip Papers

A framework for quality management

Edward Sallis

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Introduction

This Mendip Paper outlines a framework for analysing existing quality initiatives and for planning and implementing new ones. It has been designed to assist colleges both in managing quality and in using quality management as a means of institutional development. Following Barrie Dale's work, I have deliberately used the term 'framework' and not 'model' or 'system' (Dale and Boaden 1994). What is discussed here is a guide and not a prescription. My starting premise has always been that each and every institution has to find its own route to quality, and that externally prescribed approaches are usually the least effective. This is not to decry the use of the ISO9000 series, the European Quality Award, or Investors in People. These can be very useful methodologies. Rather, it is to emphasise the point that quality cannot be taken 'off the peg'. It has to be 'bespoke' to the culture and purposes of each organisation.

This quality framework seeks to integrate both of the two dominant quality ideas in further education (FE) – the 'procedural' and the 'transformational' notions of quality. A reconciliation is sought between these two positions to overcome the polarisation of views that has beset the quality debate in FE. The intention is to transcend some of the more sterile debates that have taken place, particularly over the role of the BS5750/ISO9000 series and the appropriateness of industrial quality methodologies. The framework has been designed to take colleges beyond bolt-on quality systems and to provide them with a total approach to quality management. Using the framework should be seen

as a developmental activity for a college as it provides a set of tools for organisational self-analysis and institutional improvement.

The purpose of a quality framework

To be of value for colleges, any quality management framework must pass a number of tests. These 10 tests are as follows.

1. Quality is only a meaningful idea in the context of the strategic aims and objectives of the college. Quality management in colleges must have a strategic dimension to give it direction and purpose.

2. The approach taken to quality needs to be heuristic. It should enable the institution to learn from the process of managing quality and to build the lessons from the experience into a process of continuous improvement. Any college developing a culture of quality must develop strong evaluative mechanisms. This fits in well with notions of colleges as learning organisations.

3. The framework must have a professional element which involves staff in determining, measuring and judging quality. The professional element links with the empowerment ideas that are a key aspect of total quality management (TQM).

4. It needs to meet the special requirements of vocational education and must make sense within the context of the pedagogic developments currently taking place. To be appropriate in the context of FE, a quality framework must concern itself with the central task of the educational process. It must have an influence on teaching and learning. As Warren (1992) has pointed out in a higher education context, 'what students learn ... is the most critical element of educational quality', and one that has been virtually ignored on both sides of the Atlantic. The delivery of learning to students, who are the primary customers of the process, must therefore form the central focus of the framework. As Spanbauer (1992) has argued: 'No school reform or restructuring is worth its salt unless its major focus is the teaching/learning process'.

5. The quality framework must address all the stages within the learners' career-path. This is a crucial aspect of the college's service. While the learning process is by definition central, the activities that go on either side of it – the entry and exit stages – are of vital importance. This includes the provision of a range of comprehensive student services, including services for learners with special learning difficulties (Sallis and Hingley *et al.* 1992; Miller, Dower and Inniss 1992; Further Education Funding Council 1993).

6. Although the learners are central to the process, they are not the only customers of the college. The quality framework must recognise the multiple stakeholder accountability implicit in the further education service.

7. A quality framework must address both the 'hard' issues of accountability and the 'soft' issues of care and concern, the latter being of such crucial importance in an educational establishment.

8. It must do more than prove that quality exists. It must ensure that there are mechanisms in place to enable quality improvement to take place.

9. A framework must meet the requirements of the main paymaster, the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC), which has laid out detailed quality requirements in **Assessing achievement** (FEFC 1993). However, the requirement of a quality management system is wider than merely satisfying a funding council.

10. It should be capable of being extended or modified to link with an external certification process such as the BS5750/ ISO9000 series, Investors in People and the European Quality Award.

The two concepts of quality

The challenge for colleges is to find appropriate approaches to quality management which are linked to the general thrust of national and even global developments, but yet are specific enough to take account of the special features of the FE

service. An important starting point for building quality models is to have a good understanding of what quality means both for colleges and their clients. I have discussed the definitions of quality elsewhere (Sallis 1993), but it is now clear that the concept is used in two particular ways in FE. These two concepts I will call the 'procedural' and the 'transformational' notions of quality.

The procedural concept is similar to the 'fitness for purpose' definition which underlies the BS5750/IS09000 series. Used in this sense, quality is a means to an end. The ends can be various, ranging from customer satisfaction to ensuring that there is conformance to FEFC and Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) requirements. It is an accountability model of quality, which is concerned to show that particular levels and standards are being demonstrated and maintained. Quality in this definition is largely about proving that particular quality procedures are in place, rather than looking to improve the nature of the service.

The transformational notion of quality is the other major concept employed in the college context. Used in this sense, quality is concerned with improvement. It is about empowering both students and staff, and offers new and better ways to look at the relationships in colleges. Non-hierarchical ideas of empowerment, ownership and personal responsibility are to the fore. Within this holistic notion is an all-embracing idea concerned with the totality of the college's operation. Importantly, it is concerned with the transformational aspects of culture change. Quality management is seen as the means of creating a different and better learning environment and providing an improved service to clients. It is this transformational concept which underlies the philosophy associated with total quality management.

Unfortunately, the two concepts have often been seen as antagonistic or incompatible approaches, and time has been wasted on expounding the virtues of one or the other. The truth is that a serious approach to quality development in a college requires an integration of both concepts. Quality systems underpin and give stability to methods of improvement, which on their own can be fragile and whose gains are easily lost. Any serious framework should seek to blend and integrate the two concepts of quality.

Components of the framework

A framework for quality management is developed in **Figure 1**. It focuses on the aspects of quality which a 'mature' institution will want to have in place. It seeks to integrate both the transformational and the procedural concepts of quality. It is about improving as well as proving; it is a TQM framework because it is concerned with the totality of the educational process. The framework has two important facets. The first recognises the importance of management processes to the development of a quality culture. This facet is outlined in **Figure 2**. Four components are identified and will be discussed below. They are:

1. leadership and strategy;
2. teamwork;
3. customer requirements; and
4. systems and procedures.

The second important facet is the importance of the primary customer – the learners and their career in the college. This perspective is highlighted in **Figure 3**.

Quality management – management strategies

1. Leadership and strategy

Leadership and strategy are key elements in any quality framework. For quality initiatives to succeed, quality management requires a commitment from senior management. This is the conclusion of all the major writers on quality (see for example Deming 1986; Juran 1989). Linked to purposeful leadership, effective colleges need well worked-out strategies to deal with the competitive and results-orientated environment in which colleges operate. Together with effective teamwork, leadership and strategy provide the engine for the transformational process of quality development. To be effective colleges require processes for developing their quality strategy. These include:

Figure 1: A quality management framework

- a clear and distinctive mission;
- a strategy for achieving that mission;
- the involvement of all their customers, both internal and external, in the development of strategy;
- the assessment and evaluation of the institution's effectiveness against the goals negotiated with customers.

The importance of a clear and positive strategy cannot be overstated. An organisation has to know what it is about and what constitutes the quality it is seeking to improve. Dale and Boaden (1994) have made the point that management has to share the strategy and also outline to employees what needs to be done to make mission statements and strategy documents a reality. Without clear thinking and thoughtful communication, energy can be misdirected and wasted. Too often colleges concentrate on doing things rather than doing the right things. W Edwards Deming (1986) has summed up this phenomenon in his terse phrase, 'Having lost sight of our goals we redoubled our efforts'.

It is leadership that puts strategy into action and communicates the vision to the staff. Stanley Spanbauer, former President of Fox Valley Technical College in Appleton, Wisconsin has

Figure 2: Quality management – management strategies

argued that quality management requires a particular style of leadership, which he characterises as 'transforming management'. The function of management is to provide both the vision and the culture of a 'mutually supportive environment in which teachers and managers realise that their individual successes are interlocked with team action – their achievements rise and fall together' (Spanbauer 1992). Deming (1986) makes a similar point more simply in his seminal work **Out of the crisis**: 'The aim of leadership ... is to help people do a better job with less effort'.

Tom Peters and Nancy Austin give specific consideration to educational leadership in a chapter entitled '*Excellence in school leadership*' in their book **A passion for excellence**. Their prescription of the qualities of an excellent educational leader is worthy of consideration. They see the educational leader as needing the following perspectives:

- **Vision and symbols:** the headteacher or principal must communicate the institution's values to the staff, pupils and students, and the wider community.
- **'Management by walking about'**: is the required leadership style for any institution.
- **'For the kids'**: this is their educational

equivalent to 'close to the customer'. It ensures that the institution has a clear focus on its primary customers.

- **Autonomy, experimentation, and support for failure:** educational leaders must encourage innovation amongst their staff and be prepared for the failures that inevitably accompany innovation.

- **Create a sense of 'family':** the leader needs to create a feeling of community amongst the institution's students, teachers and support staff.

- **'Sense of the whole, rhythm, passion, intensity, and enthusiasm':** these are the essential personal qualities required of the educational leader.

(Peters and Austin 1986)

2. *Teamwork*

Teamwork is the second key feature of an organisational culture built around the transformational concept of quality. It is the element that links teacher professionalism to the quality development process. It is the framework in which innovation and change become an accepted fact of life. Without teamwork, quality development cannot be instituted (Scholtes *et al.* 1990). The key aspect of teamwork in this framework is a recognition of the internal customer chain. The successful organisational structure of a quality college rests on the mutual recognition of other people's roles within the institution and the need to deliver services internally to agreed standards. Teaching a modern vocational curriculum requires the close integration of academic and support staff, particularly learning resource professionals. This element provides the link with Investors in People. The main features of effective teamwork for quality are:

- the empowerment of staff by removing barriers and assisting them to make the maximum contribution to the institution through the development of effective work groups;

- a recognition of the importance of the internal customer chain and the need to agree internal service delivery standards;

- training in and the use of effective tools for continuous improvement.

Teams can be seen as the engine of quality improvement. They make quality management work. Teams can clarify issues and ideas, and they are the means by which conflicts over direction and policy can be constructively handled. Working in teams can provide every person in the organisation with a means of expressing their views and making a contribution to the quality improvement process. A number of different types of teams are needed to produce quality improvements. As well as the more familiar course teams, which are a key element of the delivery process, it is important to have teams at an institutional level to establish policy, and also to use *ad hoc* teams to tackle urgent problems and to work on improvements.

3. *Customer requirements*

Customer requirements are the *raison d'être* of the college's existence. The primary customer of the college is the learner. The college can be seen as a service-giving organisation whose purpose is to enhance the value added to the learner during his or her stay in the college. To achieve an effective recognition of customer requirements there is a need in a college for:

- a clear customer focus;

- a means of sampling customer needs and wants;

- a means by which customers can communicate standards to the college; and

- a simple but well-structured monitoring and evaluation process.

Much mystery often surrounds the determining of customer expectations, but it need not be an elaborate process. Spanbauer (1992) puts it nicely in perspective: 'the most obvious way is to sit down with customers and talk about what is expected. Satisfaction surveys should be conducted, but asking customers if they are satisfied in a survey generally is not enough because surveys don't identify customers' expectations and they don't assess performance relative to competitors'.

Barrie Dale (1994), in his study of Japanese approaches to quality, shows the total belief existing in Japanese companies that business operations and efficiency can always be improved by reflecting customer needs and requirements. He demonstrates the considerable lengths that Japanese firms go to in order to identify needs and keep the company focused on the market. However, the key idea mentioned by Dale is the translation of customer requirements into the design of products. Unless this link between listening and action is established, then the activity of sampling customer requirements has little purpose.

Customers can be internal to the college as well as external to it. As Oakland and Porter (1994) have shown in their case study of TQM implementation at Prudential Assurance, it is as important to survey internal customer attitudes as those of external customers. Internal customers are colleagues, whether in the same area of the college or in other areas. Good teamwork and an integrated approach to external customer needs can only be made to work if there is a quality relationship between colleagues.

The management of customer satisfaction in colleges is still in its infancy. The use of ideas such as quality function deployment (QFD) is not as yet common currency in colleges. The idea behind QFD is to develop tools to translate customer requirements into the design of products, their delivery and after-sales service. G R Burn (1994) argues that the importance of this concept for competitiveness is that it allows excitement to be built into products. As they become more and more standardised, it is often this excitement that differentiates one product from another. In FE the design of the curriculum – the product – often has few, if any, formal linkages into the sampling of customer requirements. Customising the idea of quality function deployment for use in further education may have an important role to play in quality improvement in the future.

4. Systems and procedures

Systems and procedures are the cement of quality; they provide the support to keep it functioning. They provide the instrumental or procedural element of the quality framework. The requirements for effective systems include:

- clear and simple documentation of the key elements of the quality system;
- auditing of the systems and procedures to ensure they are being followed and that they perform effectively;
- an effective means of demonstrating institutional accountability.

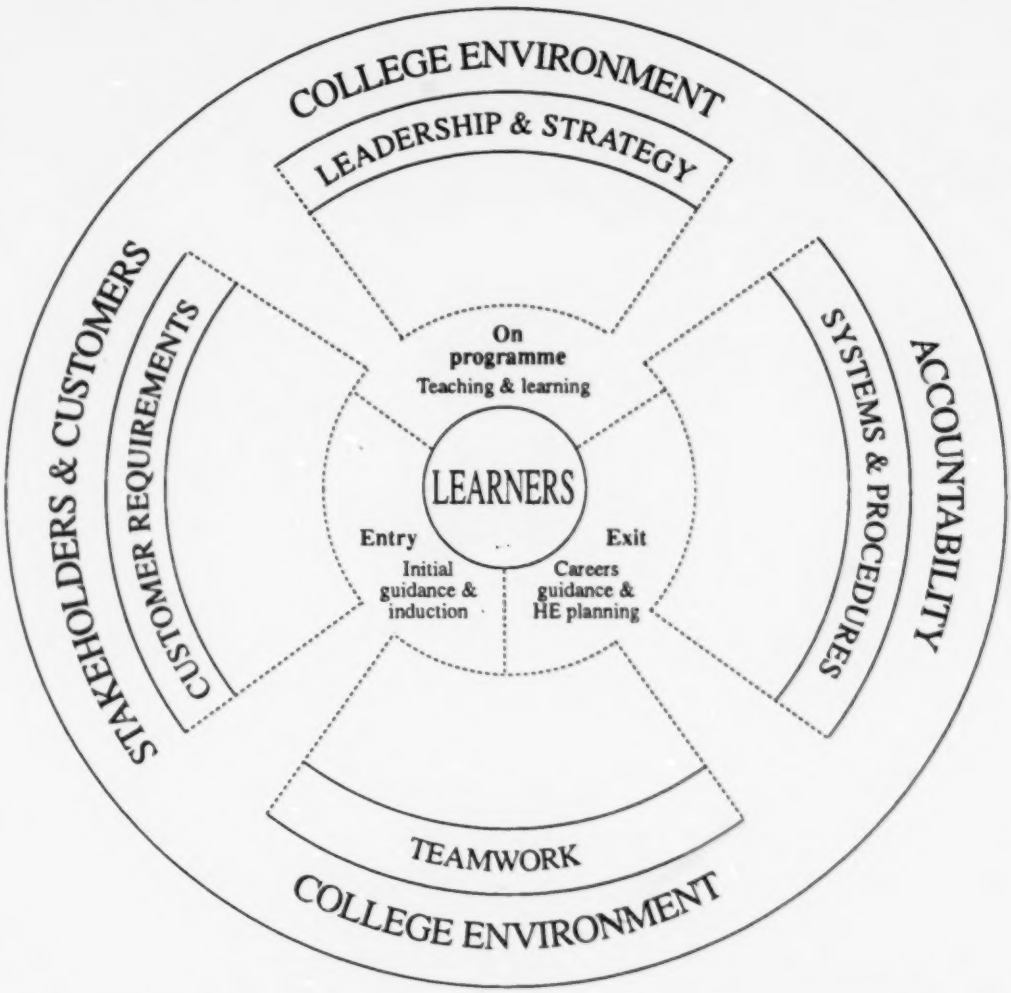
A systems approach to quality is the least glamorous aspect of quality management, and one which is sometimes labelled as bureaucratic. However, there is considerable evidence to suggest that without properly documented procedures, quality improvements often have little staying power. The principal means of implementing quality systems is to use the BS5750/ISO9000 series, as a number of colleges have successfully done. The National Accreditation Council for Certification Bodies has recently published guidance on the implementation of ISO9001 to further education and training (NACCB 1993). Its approach is interesting because, unlike some earlier attempts at a translation for education, NACCB has started from the point of view of the learner and his/her career path in college. While there is no need to use the ISO9000 series in colleges there is, however, a growing imperative to have a documented quality system and this will inevitably require colleges to use at least part of the methodology of the international series.

The learner focus

Figure 3 concentrates on the learner's requirements. The service, i.e. product, provided by the college is the totality of services provided to the learner. This can more appropriately be expressed as the learning opportunities available. Of prime importance is the programme of study, although by itself this is not a sufficient definition of the college's service. In an institution which takes quality seriously, it is also essential that the learner is given every opportunity to find the right programme. Learners also need the right progression advice to make the most of the opportunities that the programme of study has provided for them.

Recently, it has become commonplace to view the learner as having a career path through the

Figure 3: Quality management – focus on the learner



institution (Sallis and Hingley 1992; Miller and Inniss 1992; FEFC 1993; NACCB 1993). The importance of this simple idea cannot be underestimated, and it needs recognition in any quality framework.

In the entry phase the quality framework needs to emphasise the vital role of impartial advice and guidance. For the learner, informed choice is an essential attribute of quality. There is little point in providing exceptional teaching if the learner is on an inappropriate or wrong level programme. Of equal importance is a high quality induction process, which not only introduces the learner to the programme and the study skills element, but ensures there is a good diagnostic process to identify any deficiencies in skills or learning. This is the education version of 'zero defects', ensuring that any such deficiencies are remedied early and do not lead to failure.

The next stage is the on-programme phase. This is predominantly about teaching and learning. If quality management is to have relevance in education, it needs to address the quality of the learner's experience. Unless it does that, it will not make a substantial contribution to quality in education. In a period when most institutions are being asked to do more with less it is important that they focus on their prime activity – learning. Learners are all different and learn best in a style suited to their needs and inclinations. An

educational institution that takes the total quality route must address the issue of learning styles and needs to have strategies for individualisation and differentiation in learning. The learner is the primary customer, and unless the learning style meets individual requirements it will not be possible for that institution to claim the title of total quality.

Colleges have an obligation to make learners aware of the variety of learning methods available to them. They need to give learners opportunities to sample learning in a variety of different styles. Institutions need to understand that many learners also like to switch or mix and match styles, and must try to be sufficiently flexible to provide choice in learning. Miller, Dower and Inniss (1992) make the same point. Their argument is that the FE college should 'ensure that learners experience a range of teaching and learning styles so that their chance of success is maximised'.

The various styles of learning should enable the learner to develop both emotionally as well as intellectually, and to develop skills and competences as well as knowledge. The acquiring of core, common skills centred around communications, familiarity with numbers, interpersonal skills and the ability to make decisions and solve problems is an essential aspect of a quality educational experience. The skills developed should be broad and transferable, providing a competence in the chosen field but also an adaptability and flexibility to deal with a constantly changing future. The application of core skills precisely mirrors the quality tools employed as part of the 'kaizen' process in those industrial companies that employ such tools. Providing a broad and challenging curriculum framework marries the best of educational practice with quality thinking.

Much work has still to be done on how to use quality principles in the classroom. In fact this is one of the areas that requires extensive work. Some of the elements might take the following pattern. A start could be made by the learners and their teachers establishing their 'mission', which could take the form of 'all shall succeed'. This is an obvious area for improvement, but is nevertheless one that is frequently neglected. In 1993 the Audit Commission and OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education) drew attention to the high wastage and failure rate throughout the whole of post-16 education. **Unfinished business** (Audit Commission/OFSTED 1993) demonstrated that 40 per cent of students pursuing the whole range of programmes, whether at school or college, were either not completing or failing programmes.

After establishing the mission, negotiation might take place about how the two parties will seek to achieve it – the styles of learning and teaching, and resources required. Individual learners may negotiate their own action plans to give them motivation and direction. The process of negotiation may require the establishment of a quality steering committee or forum to provide feedback and give the learners an opportunity to manage their own learning. Parents or employers might well be represented. Detailed monitoring through progress charting will need to be undertaken by both teachers and students to ensure that all are on track. This is important to ensure that timely and appropriate corrective action can be applied if there is a danger of failure.

The final phase of the career path is the exit stage. This is the preparation for the learners' progression to employment or further study. It is a key stage, to ensure that learners are able to make the best use of their qualifications, knowledge and skills, but there is a danger that this stage can be overlooked. It is of crucial importance to the customer but in the past has often been seen to be of less interest to the institution. Too much emphasis was put on the first two stages, which brought the college 'business'. This 'front-end imbalance' should be remedied by the new FEFC funding methodology, which relates payments to all three stages.

A variety of approaches can be employed to improve the careers planning and guidance provided. Hingley (1993), for example, favours a quality audit approach. In this he employs a check list or statement of entitlements as the basis of the process of improvement. Such a check list can provide the opportunity and the vehicle for the joint examination and clarification of present practice, and through debate can lead to the build-up of future scenarios. This provides for a shared ownership of the improvement process (a quality check list is included as an appendix to my **Total quality management in education** 1993).

Evaluation

Quality in FE started with evaluation and we must not lose sight of its importance now that quality is conceived of as being a wider concern: quality systems always need a feedback loop. There must be mechanisms in place to ensure that outcomes can be analysed against the plan. Monitoring and evaluation are key elements in strategic planning. If the institution is to be a learning rather than a static organisation, a process of evaluation and feedback must be an essential element in its culture. The evaluation process should focus on the customer, and should explore two issues. Firstly, to what degree is the institution meeting the individual requirements of its customers, both internal and external, and, secondly, how far it is achieving its strategic mission and goals. To ensure that evaluation is monitoring both individual and institutional goals, it must take place at three levels:

1. **Immediate**

   Involves the daily checking of student progress. This type of evaluation is largely informal in nature, and is undertaken by individual teachers or at the team level. Establishing a strong feedback loop is an important element of any quality management process. Evaluation should be a continuous process and not just left until the end of the programme of study. The results of evaluation processes should be discussed with the students, perhaps by means of completing a record of achievement. The very act of being involved in evaluation will assist in building up the students' analytical skills. It is important that the institution uses the results of formal monitoring to establish the validity of its programmes. Teams must be prepared to take the necessary corrective action if the customers' experiences do not meet their expectations. None of this is easy, as teachers who have pioneered such processes know. It can be an emotional experience and one that can take unexpected turns. What it does is to provide students with motivation and practical experience in the use of quality tools, which are transferable to other situations.

2. **Short-term**

   Requires more structured and specific means of evaluation, to ensure that pupils/students are on track and achieving their potential. Its purpose is to make certain that anything needing to be put right is corrected. The use of statistical data and student profiling should be features of this process, which is undertaken at a team and departmental level. Short-term evaluation can be employed as a method of quality control to highlight mistakes and problems. The emphasis is on corrective action to prevent, so far as is practical, student failure or underachievement.

3. **Long-term**

   An overview of the progress towards achieving strategic goals. This is mainly institution-led evaluation. It requires large-scale sampling of customer attitudes and views, as well as monitoring by a range of institutional performance indicators. This type of evaluation is undertaken as a prelude to updating the strategic plan. It can involve the use of questionnaires to gain feedback from both primary and secondary customers. The information gained from surveys can be cross-referenced with quantitative performance data on successes, pass rates, student destinations, etc.

   An important purpose of this type of evaluation is prevention –finding out what has gone wrong, and preventing it from happening again. It is a checking mechanism to ensure that continuous improvement initiatives are meeting their objectives. An interesting model of using student feedback as a means of strategic institutional review can be found in Robert's innovative paper **Establishing customer needs and perceptions** (1992). In it, he compares the priorities established by a college with those of its primary customers, parents and employers. Roberts found that the priorities of his students varied in a number of significant ways from those established through the usual management mechanisms. His findings also highlight the things of most importance to the parents, which were termly reports, parents' evenings and contacts with staff.

The function of evaluation at each stage is different. Too often, evaluation is seen as having prevention as its main purpose. It is used as a means of discovering what went right and what went wrong, and using the information to improve things next time round. In education, this usually means next year. Preventing things from happening again is a perfectly valid use of evaluation, but it has a major drawback in that it does not put right the things that have gone wrong for this year's students. If problems are identified, there must be mechanisms to correct them immediately. Students should not be allowed to suffer: putting things right next year will not help them. They need corrective action to improve their learning, or to stop them underachieving or failing. A primary purpose of evaluation is to ensure that students are on target, and if they are not, to take the necessary actions to guarantee that they reach their goals. Unfortunately, evaluation is too often used to improve future rather than present provision.

The failure to distinguish the long-term from the short-term has led to evaluation mechanisms being employed in possibly misleading ways. In formal evaluation, too much emphasis is placed on prevention rather than correction. In FE, the main evaluation paradigm is usually based around elaborate, periodic (often termly) student questionnaires. The aim is to establish close student feedback and the validity of the curriculum delivery processes, as well as to seek out student perceptions of the college's services. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with questionnaires or this type of evaluation, providing it is clear what value the output has. This type of evaluation is excellent for identifying strategic and institutional issues. It is far less effective as a method of identifying the factors that have affected the performance of individual students.

Questionnaires are of most value for identifying macro issues (access to the institution, equal opportunities, perception of the refectory, general teaching styles, etc.) rather than the micro issues that affect individual performance (e.g. feedback on the last assignment, whether students are achieving what has been agreed in their action plan, or whether they have difficulties in a particular subject). It is not possible to check on an individual student's learning by periodically analysing the results of questionnaires. An individual's perceptions and problems become lost in aggregate scores for the group. This danger is heightened when questionnaires are drawn up to reflect the institution's priorities and concerns rather than those of the students. Only very occasionally are questionnaires drawn up after a full analysis of what is important to students.

This is not to argue that customer surveys are not of value; they are of tremendous value for marketing and strategic planning. However, to gain this type of information they need only to be administered periodically, on a sample basis. It is important not to confuse the preventative and long-term improvement purposes of evaluation, and neglect the simpler forms of evaluation which can provide possible immediate solutions to particular problems. Checking on individual performance can better be based around action planning and the charting of student progress, and around well thought-out and planned tutorial programmes than through highly elaborate processes.

The management of quality

The management of quality is an essential part of the quality framework. **Figure 4** illustrates the organisational features that need to be in place for the management of quality in a college. Spanbauer (1987) has written that 'the vocational-technical college of the future must be organised and managed in order for it to become as fluid as the modern society it is to serve'. Institutions with traditional ways of working will find it increasingly difficult to cope with the pressure of change to manage for quality. Such institutions are usually characterised by departmental barriers, lack of a common mission, overbearing hierarchies, and an over-reliance on rigid procedures (Turner 1991). They will not have developed a customer focus and their students are more often than not seen as liabilities, not assets. Improvements, when they are attempted, usually have reducing costs as their goal.

What quality management offers is the opportunity for an institution to take a 180-degree turn. The effective quality institution has a different outlook, diametrically opposed to the traditional model. It has a flatter structure with strong, integrating horizontal links. Most importantly, it allows for participation by teams in the decision-making processes which directly impact on their work. It will have integrated quality into its structure,

Figure 4: Quality management framework – the process

recognising that quality involves everyone at all levels making their contribution. To achieve this, a considerable investment needs to be made in people as they are the keys to quality, and hence the institution's future.

If a college aspires to be a total quality institution, it must act like one. It must innovate and drive ahead to achieve the vision contained in its mission statement. It should recognise that quality will always provide an edge in the market. And most importantly, it must carry the message to its staff and ensure that they are partners in the process. The quality route is by now well-trodden but just as hard. The driving force has to come from the top and the process has to be constantly nurtured and reinforced. Leadership is the key, but so is listening and learning. It is often the little things that provide the evidence of quality. Institutions that make the effort to get the details right also have the right approach to the major issues. In a world where so many services look superficially similar, it is attention to detail that provides the competitive edge. Above all, in the words of Tom Peters (1989): 'Ensure that quality is always defined in terms of the customer perceptions'.

There are no correct organisational forms for quality management, although some structures are more suitable than others. Structures need to be

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appropriate and to facilitate the quality management process. Evidence suggests that as quality develops, much of the hierarchy is eliminated and flatter structures with strong cross-institutional links take its place. The more appropriate organisational forms are simple, lean and are built around strong teamwork (Peters 1989). A tall hierarchy with excessive layers of management can make it difficult for those in the classroom to do their job effectively. In its place is substituted teamwork.

The development and strengthening of teamwork, so much a feature of quality management, reduces the need for much of the middle management controlling and scheduling function. Instead, middle managers become the leaders and champions of quality, and take on the role of supporting teams and assisting their development. This new role for middle managers is important because teamwork can have a downside. Teams that are too autonomous may branch out in uncoordinated and ineffective ways. Teamwork needs to be structured within a simple but effective management system. It is important that teams understand the vision and policies of the institution. This is one of the reasons why vision and leadership are so heavily emphasised in the literature on quality.

Figure 5 lists the different characteristics of the quality college and the traditional college.

Figure 5: The quality college

QUALITY COLLEGE	TRADITIONAL COLLEGE
Customer focused	Focused on internal needs
Focus is on preventing problems	Focus is on detecting problems
Invests in people	Not systematic in its approach to staff development
Has a strategy for quality	Lacks a strategic quality vision
Treats complaints as an opportunity to learn	Treats complaints as a nuisance
Has defined the quality characteristics for all areas of the organisation	Is vague about quality standards
Has a quality policy and plan	Has no quality plan
Senior management is leading quality	The management role is seen as one of control
The improvement process involves everybody	Only the management team is involved
A quality facilitator leads the improvement process	There is no quality facilitator
People are seen to create quality – creativity is encouraged	Procedures and rules are all important
Is clear about roles and responsibilities	Is vague about roles and responsibilities
Has clear evaluation strategies	Has no systematic evaluation strategy
Sees quality as a means to improve customer satisfaction	See quality as a means to cut costs
Plans long-term	Plans short-term
Quality is seen as part of the culture	Quality is seen as another and troublesome initiative
Is developing quality in line with its own strategic imperatives	Is examining quality to meet the demands of external agencies
Has a distinctive mission	Has no distinctive mission
Treats colleagues as customers	Has a hierarchical culture

Organisations, from a quality management perspective, are systems designed to serve customers. To serve the customers, all the parts and systems of the institution must dovetail. The success of any one unit of the organisation affects the performance of the whole. The difference between a mature structure operating under quality management and the more usual organisational forms is that traditional organisations are structured around functions, while quality management institutions are organised around processes. The idea is that the whole of a process should be under a single and simple chain of command. For example, are all the functions associated with student support and welfare integrated and under a single source of control? Under quality management, structure should follow process, and the following are necessary features of any quality organisation:

- **Unit optimisation:** every unit, programme and department needs to operate efficiently and effectively. Each area needs to have clear, and preferably written, quality standards within which to operate.

- **Vertical alignment:** every member of staff needs to understand the strategy of the institution and its direction and mission, although they may not need to know the detailed breakdown of objectives.

- **Horizontal alignment:** there should be a lack of competition between units/ programmes/departments, and an understanding of the aims and requirements of other parts of the organisation. Mechanisms need to be in place for dealing effectively with any boundary problems.

- **A single and simple chain of command for each process:** the key processes, whether they are curricular, pastoral or administrative, need to be charted and organised so that each process is brought under a single chain of command. The charting process is best carried out from an analysis which starts by asking who are the customers for a process, and continues by analysing their needs and the standards they should expect.

Structural reorganisations are not a requirement for quality management. Reorganisations may be useful and necessary to the quality improvement process but, equally, they can divert attention from quality improvement and lead to institutional fatigue. There are plenty of examples in education where organisational restructuring has impeded quality development. There is usually only so much energy within a system. Quality management usually provides as much change as the organisation can reasonably cope with. Staff need some familiar signposts while adapting to new working methods. It is sensible to let structural change develop out of the process of improving quality, and so it is probably best to avoid organisational restructuring at the start of the quality programme.

Conclusion: linking to the European Quality Award

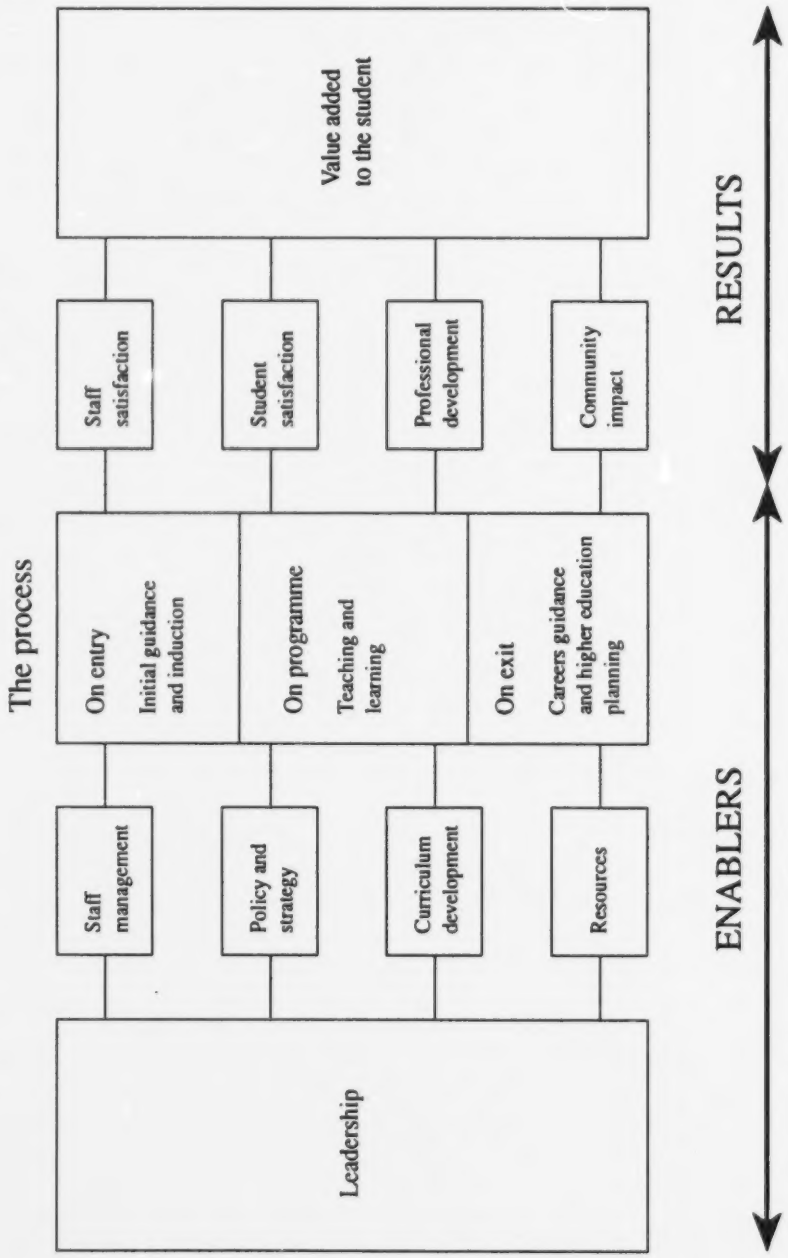
The quality framework developed here fits into the transformational notion of quality, whilst recognising the need for clear systems and procedures associated with the procedural approach. It is essentially a TQM approach, recognising the importance of the totality of the college's service as being essential to the well-being of the learner. It has many linkages with industrial models but has been modified to fit the special circumstances of education. It blends the lessons from industry with the needs of best educational practice.

To link the model into the mainstream it is useful to see how this approach links into the newest of TQM standards, the European Quality Award (EQA) developed by the European Foundation for Quality Management. The EQA dovetails nicely into the framework outlined here, although some customisation for further education is necessary. For example, curriculum development has been added to the 'enablers'. This has been done to recognise the centrality of the curriculum to the learning process. As this is a specifically vocational education approach, the 'process element' of the EQA has been explored along the lines of the entry, on-programme and exit elements of the learners' career path explored in this framework.

Using the EQA links the quality framework into an increasingly recognised and powerful standard of quality. **Figure 6** shows what a customised version of the European Quality Award for further

education could look like. It has been designed as a customised refinement and not as a new model. While the EQA does not provide a British Standard type kitemark, it does give an objective means by which colleges can appraise their quality management systems against business and international standards. The use of the European Quality Award can provide a useful means of linking college systems with industrial counterparts, while allowing specifically educational aspects and values to be catered for.

Figure 6: The application of the European Quality Award to further education



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